MURMUR
MURMUR
WEREN'T YOU WATCHING THE DOOR?!
OF COURSE, SIR! NO ONE COULD'VE SNUCK IN HERE!
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER VILLAGERS?
WE'VE CONFIRMED VIA RADIO THAT THERE ARE NO OTHER VICTIMS.

CHAPTER 9

KING'S GAME ORIGIN

STORY BY NOBUAKI KANAZAWA ART BY JITA YAMADA

*ALL PAPERS: NAKAMURA HISAKO

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, KAZU-NARI.
PAT
CLENCH
WE COULDN'T DO ANY-THING THIS TIME...
AND IF ANYONE'S TO BLAME, IT'S MICHIKO FOR RIG-GING THAT DAMN LOT-TERY.
OF COURSE, I'M SURE SHE DIDN'T THINK HISAKO-SAN WOULD ACTU-ALLY BE KILLED.

MURMUR
IT HAPPENED JUST AS THE LETTER DESCRIBED...
MURMUR
THE COPS TALKED SUCH A BIG GAME, NOW LOOK AT US—
WHISPER
WHISPER
THE POLICE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE KING'S POWERS...
IT'S ONLY... GONNA CONTINUE...
SLIDE

EVERYONE, I'M SO VERY SORRY THINGS TURNED OUT THIS WAY!
BOW
...
WHILE HISAKO-SAN HAS UNFORTUNATELY PASSED AWAY.
...HER HUSBAND KAZUYUKI AND SON KAZUYA ARE SAFE
SILENCE
...
SLAM
WE'VE MOVED THEM TO ANOTHER ROOM AND THANKFULLY THEY'RE DOING AS WELL AS—
CUT THE BULLSHIT, WHAT ABOUT US?!

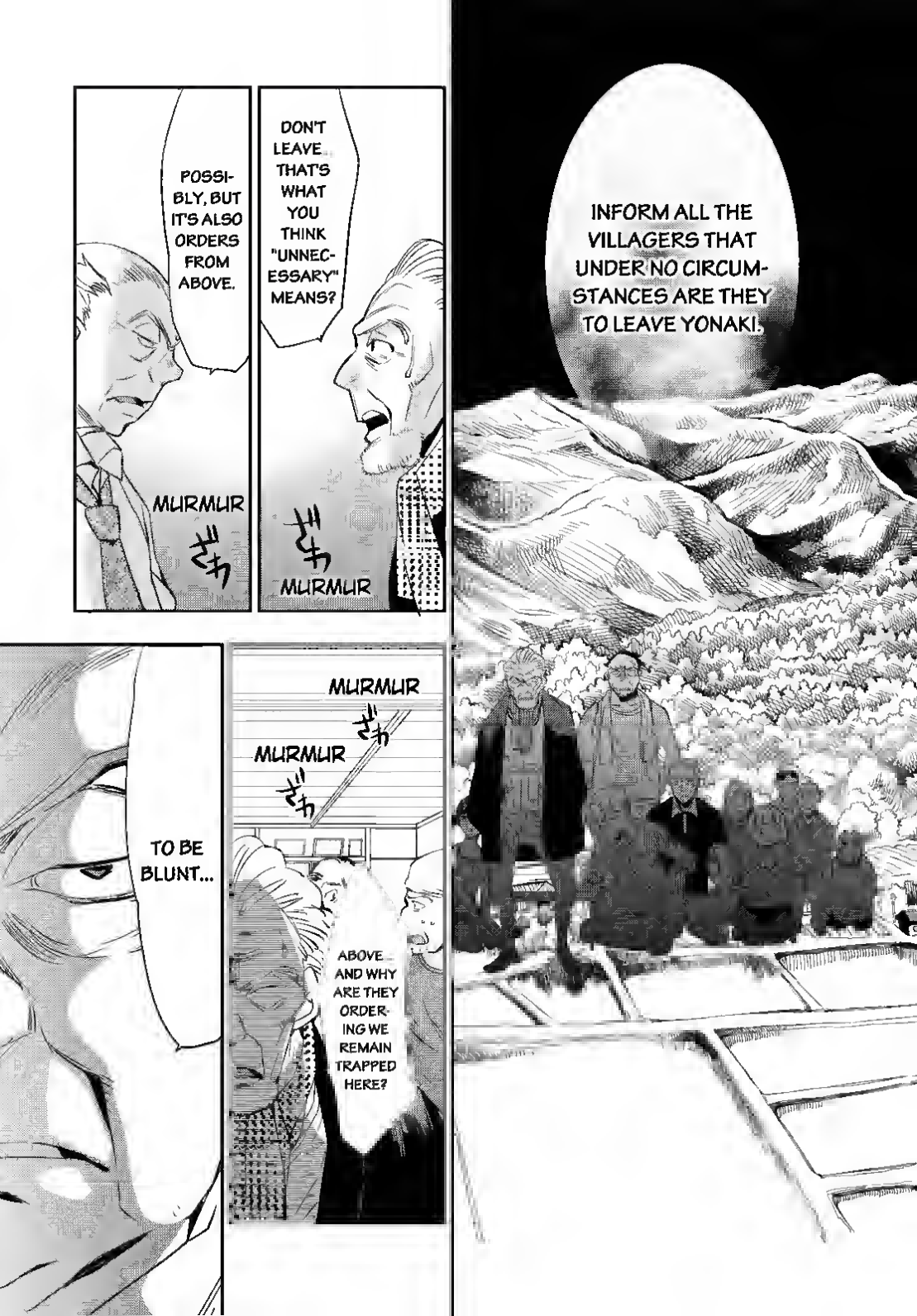
MAYBE WE DUNNO WHO THIS "KING" IS, BUT WE DO KNOW HE CAN KILL PEOPLE WITHOUT LAYIN' A FINGER ON 'EM!
WE'RE NOT SAFE ANY-WHERE.
NOT EVEN IN YOUR DAMN STATION!
SADLY, ATSU-SHI-SAN.
YOU'RE ABSO-LUTELY RIGHT
HISAKO-SAN'S MURDER WAS OTHER-WORLDLY.
CERTAINLY NOT SOME-THING A NORMAL HUMAN BEING COULD'VE DONE
I'VE INFORMED MY SUPERI-ORS, AND THEY'RE SEEKING HELP BEYOND OUR LOCAL POLICE FORCE
THEN YOU'VE GOT AT LEAST SOME IDEA OF THE CULPRIT'S IDENTITY?
IS IT EVEN A HUMAN AT ALL?
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
DON'T BE RI-DICU-LOUS.

AT THE VERY LEAST, WE CAN BE SURE THEY'RE HUMAN IN SOME SHAPE OR FORM.
KAZUNARI...
THE KING'S ORDERS COME VIA LETTERS.
I.E. A HUMAN METHOD OF COMMUNICATION
EVEN WITHOUT KNOWING THE DETAILS OR MOTIVE BEHIND THE ORDERS
THE FACT THAT HE FORCED KAZUNARI-KUN TO NAME A FELLOW VILLAGER SMACKS OF A HUMAN PERPETRATOR.
SO YOU'RE SAYING IT'S A HUMAN, BUT WITH SUPERNATURAL POWERS?!
THERE'S NO WAY TO BE SURE.
BUT WE CAN BE CERTAIN THAT THE KING IS SOMEWHERE NEARBY.
BECAUSE...
SLIP
UGH...I KNEW IT.

JUST A BIT EARLIER, ONE OF MY MEN FOUND THE TRADE-MARK BLACK EN-VELOPE WEDGED IN A WINDOW.
AND OF COURSE, INSIDE IS ANOTHER ORDER IN THE KING'S GAME.
I'VE GOT A COPY RIGHT HERE...IT READ AS FOL-LOWS:
THIS IS THE KING'S GAME.
ALL VILLAGERS ARE PARTICIPATING.
THE KING'S ORDERS ARE ABSOLUTE.
PLEASE CARRY THEM OUT BY THE END OF THE DAY.
PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO QUIT.

DON'T TRY ANYTHING UNNECESSARY AS RELATES TO THE GAME.
ANYONE WHO TRIES SOMETHING UNNECESSARY WILL BE KILLED BY EXSANGUINATION.
ANOTHER ORDER FROM THE KING!
BUT...
"UNNECESSARY"?
AND THERE'S OUR PROBLEM.

DO THE POLICE HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT HE MEANS BY "UNNECESSARY"?
UNLIKE THE PREVIOUS ORDERS, THIS ONE DOESN'T REQUIRE ANY ACTION
SOME OF OUR FORENSICS GUYS SUSPECT IT'S A DIFFERENT PERSON
WE'VE GOT A FEW THEORIES.
...BUT THE SHAKY HANDWRITING MATCHES THE PREVIOUS ONES, SO I THINK WE'RE BETTER OFF ASSUMING IT'S THE SAME GUY.
TO THAT END, WE NEED TO ENSURE EVERYONE'S COOPERATION
ELDER?


INFORM ALL THE VILLAGERS THAT UNDER NO CIRCUM-STANCES ARE THEY TO LEAVE YONAKI.
DON'T LEAVE... THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK "UNNEC-ESSARY" MEANS?
POSSI-BLY, BUT IT'S ALSO ORDERS FROM ABOVE.
MURMUR
ざわ
MURMUR
ざわ
MURMUR
ざわ
ABOVE... AND WHY ARE THEY ORDER-ING WE REMAIN TRAPPED HERE?
TO BE BLUNT...

WHA—
YOU STILL SUSPECT US?!
IT'S BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE KING IS SOMEONE IN THE VILLAGE.
RARGH
AND YOU WANNA TREAT EVERYONE LIKE SERIAL KILLERS?!
YOU BASTARD, HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED ALREADY?!
IT'S ONLY A POSSIBILITY!

SO YOU WANT US TO STAY HERE IN YONAKI WITH THE KING AND DIE?!
OF COURSE NOT!
WE'LL CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO PROTECT ALL OF YOU!
LIKE WE TALKED ABOUT BEFORE, IT'S A FACT THAT THE KING HAS SOME KIND OF SPECIAL ABILITY.
IF HE GETS OUT INTO THE CAPITAL, JUST IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF HAVOC HE COULD WREAK!

MURMUR
MURMUR
I'M SURE MOST OF YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING TO ESCAPE.
WHISPER
NOW...
AND IT'S PLAIN THAT THE KING IS TARGETING THE CITIZENS OF THIS VILLAGE
OUR ONLY OPTION IS TO CATCH THE KING AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
WE'VE INSTITUTED A MEDIA BLACKOUT TO KEEP THIS OUT OF THE NEWS...
BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF THE SITUATION AND IS WORKING WITH US AS WE SPEAK.
PLEASE UNDERSTAND, YOU'VE GOT MORE THAN JUST THE LOCAL POLICE WORKING TO PROTECT YOU!

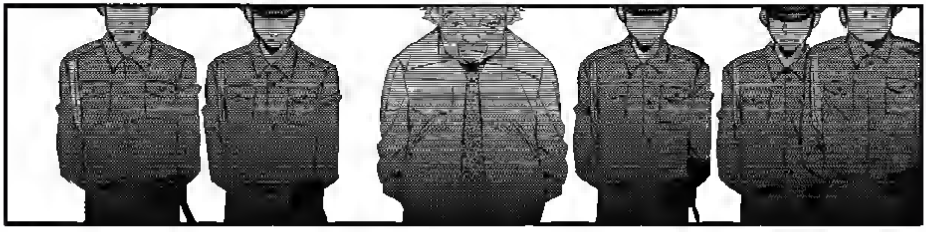
EVEN THE GOV-ERN-MENT...
MAYBE WE'LL GET SOME-WHERE NOW?
MURMUR
MURMUR
NO, IT DOESN'T MATTER... THE KING MUST BE GOD...
BUDDHA HAVE MERCY...
IT'S GOD, PUNISH-ING THE WICKED!
THAT'S CRAZY TALK!
WHAT KINDA GOD WOULD LET THIS HAPPEN?!
MURMUR
MURMUR
BUT YOU SAW HOW HISAKO-SAN DIED! NO MAN COULD DO THAT!
MURMUR
YOU HEARD THE DETEC-TIVE, THE KING SENDS LET-TERS BE-CAUSE HE'S HUMAN!
MURMUR
YEAH... THE KING'S GAME LET-TERS ALL SOUND LIKE A CHILD WROTE THEM...
MURMUR
THEN YOU THINK A KID IS THE KING?
MURMUR
MURMUR
DON'T SAY THAT!
BUT IT'S POS-SIBLE...
MURMUR
SLAM

LADIES, GENTLE-MEN, DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE KING!
THIS TIME WE HAD AN OFFICER STATIONED BY EVERY MAILBOX.
AND SO THE LETTER ARRIVED IN A DIF-FERENT PLACE.
THIS PROVES THE KING IS WARY OF THE POLICE!

THERE ARE SOME THINGS EVEN THE KING CAN'T DO!
HE'S NOT A GOD! HE'S NOT ALL-POWERFUL!

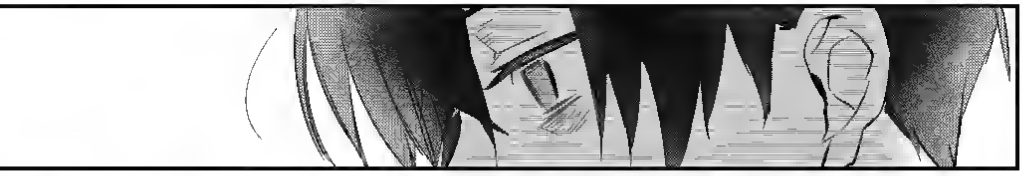
MEN, WOMEN, OLD, YOUNG... EVERYONE.
NOW, WE NEED TO DO A HAND-WRITING ANALYSIS ON EVERYONE.

IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT IT'S STILL SOMETHING WE CAN DO TO GET CLOSER TO THE KING.



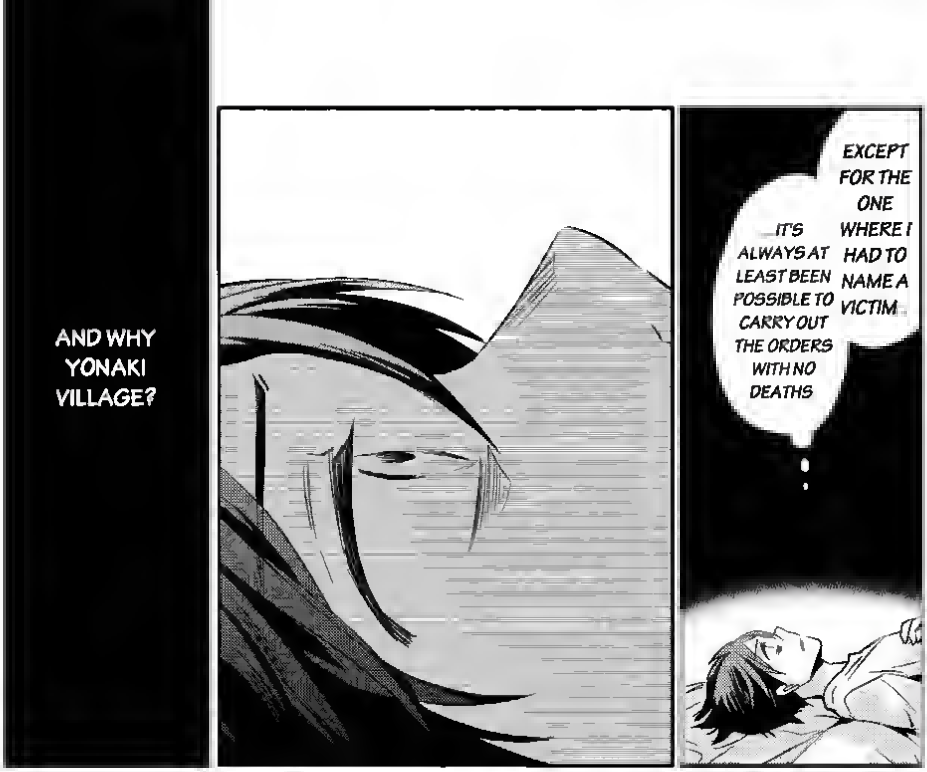
AND SO WE WERE CALLED ONE BY ONE INTO A TINY BACK ROOM AND ORDERED TO WRITE A COPY OF THE KING'S MOST RECENT LETTER.
3. GLARE
MORE THAN A FEW WERE UPSET ABOUT BEING SUSPECTS...
BUT DOUJI-MA-SAN MADE NO EXCEP-TIONS.
THE POLICE SENT US HOME.
...AND THE EASTERN SKY BEGAN TO BRIGHTEN.
FINALLY, THE LONG NIGHT ENDED...

...DRAGGING OUR FEET LIKE THEY WERE MADE OF LEAD.
WE ALL SHUFFLED HOME IN SILENCE...



EXHAUSTED...

ROLL
UNNEC-
ESSARY...
HUH...
DOUJI-
MA-SAN
HAD A
POINT.
THIS
ORDER IS
DIFFER-
ENT FROM
THE REST
THIS TIME
IT'S NOT
ABOUT
FORCING
PEOPLE
TO TAKE
ACTION...
IT'S
TRYING
TO LIMIT
ACTION
INSTEAD.
WHAT
EXACTLY
DOES HE
WANT TO
STOP US
FROM
DOING,
THOUGH?
WHAT
DOES THE
KING
WANT?
IS HE
REALLY
JUST A
PLAIN OLD
KILLER?


AND WHY YONAKI VILLAGE?
...IT'S ALWAYS AT LEAST BEEN POSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT THE ORDERS WITH NO DEATHS
EXCEPT FOR THE ONE WHERE I HAD TO NAME A VICTIM
!
...HAVE TO SUFFER?
SLUMP
WHY DO WE...
DRIP

WHEN IS THE KING'S GAME GOING TO END?!
DAMN YOU!

FRIDAY
AUGUST
12, 7:11
A.M.

TUP
トン
DID GRAND-MA NOT GO TO SLEEP?
TUP
トン
NO SEEING...
GRAND-MA?
I'M COMING IN.
NO HEARING
くぅ ふ
い しき
ゴボ
DRIP
NO SMELLING
NO TASTING
DRIP
ごぼ

GRAND-MA, ARE YOU OKAY?
YOU'RE SAYING THE SUTRA ALL WEIRD—
DELUSION
DRIP
NO FEAR
ABANDON
CONFUSED
EXPERIENCE
NIRVANA
SHLIK

KA—
DRIP
ゴボ
か
DRIP
ゴボ
KAZU...
かず
DRIP
ゴボ
な
...NA
DRIP
ゴボ
RI...
り
DRIP
GRAND-
MA...?!
KA—
ゴボ
DRIP